

CHAPTER IV

FOOD, CLOTHING, AND EQUIPMENT

THE PROBLEM OF PURCHASE

IN the spring of 1917 there were in the United States some 4,000,000 young men who were about to become soldiers, although they little suspected the fact. Before they entered the Army, as well as after they were in it, these men consumed such ordinary necessities of life as food, coats, trousers, socks, shoes, and blankets.

These simple facts lead directly to the mistaken conclusion that the problem of supplying the necessities of life for the soldiers in the Army was the comparatively simple one of diverting into the camps substantially the same amounts of food and clothing as these young men would have used in their homes if there had been no war.

These men constituted about one twenty-fifth of the population of the country and undoubtedly consumed before the war more than one twenty-fifth of the food and clothing used in the United States. But after every possible allowance has been made for the requirements of youth and the wastefulness of war, the figures of Army purchases still present surprising contrasts with those of civilian use in normal times.

Some of these contrasts are shown in diagram 22, which compares total American production of blankets, wool gloves, wool socks, and men's shoes in 1914, as given in the census of manufacturers, with Army purchases of the same articles in 1918.

The first two columns of the diagram relate to blankets. They show that the Army purchases in 1918 were two and one-quarter times as great as the entire American production in 1914. To put it another way, the figures mean that the blankets bought in one year for the use of 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 soldiers would have been sufficient to make good